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ORATION

DELIVERED

ON THE FOURTH DAY OF JULY, 1835,

BEFORE THE

CITIZENS OF BEVERLY,

WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF PARTY.

BY EDWARD EVERETT.

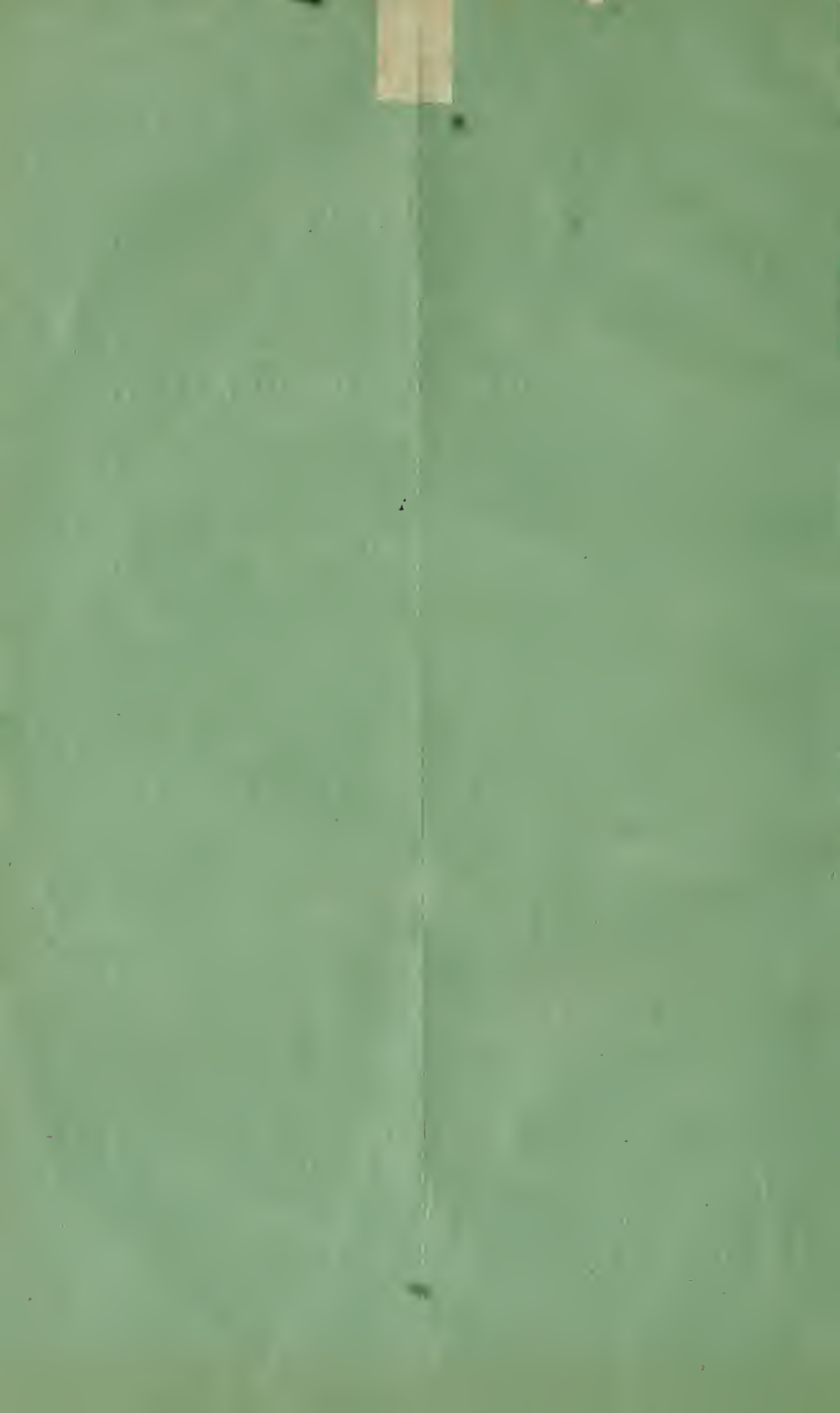
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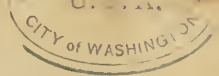
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O R A T I O N .

WHEN our fathers united in resistance to the oppressive measures of the British ministry, a few only of the leading patriots,—and those principally of Massachusetts,—contemplated the establishment of an Independent Government. They were unanimously determined to assert their rights, and to stand or fall in their defence; but the mass of the people desired and expected a reconciliation. There is preserved a letter of Washington, written from Philadelphia, on the ninth of October, 1774, at which place he was in attendance, as a member of the first Revolutionary Congress. It is addressed to Captain McKenzie, an officer of the British army in Boston, with whom Washington had served in the former war. It probably gives the precise state of the feelings of the patriots, both in and out of Congress, with the exception of a very few bold, far-reaching,—and I might almost say inspired,—individuals, who went far beyond their age, and knew that separation and independence were inevitable. It contains unquestionably the feelings and opinions of Washington himself. “I think,” says he, “I can

announce it as a fact, that it is not the wish nor the interest of the government of Massachusetts, or any other government upon this continent, separately or collectively, to set up for Independence; but this you may rely upon, that none of them will ever submit to the loss of those valuable rights and privileges, which are essential to the inhabitants of every free state, and without which life, liberty, and property are rendered totally insecure.”* The address to the King, which was adopted by Congress a short time after this letter was written, contains the most solemn protestations of loyalty;—and after setting forth in strong language the views entertained in America of the ministerial policy, it adds, “these sentiments are extorted from hearts, that would much more willingly bleed in your Majesty’s service.”

I have no doubt these and numerous other like protestations were entirely sincere; and I quote them to show, in the clearest manner, that the revolutionary struggle was a contest for principle, in which our fathers engaged with reluctance, and that the torch of Independence was not lighted at the unholy fire of personal ambition. But the measures of the British ministry were conceived in the lofty spirit of offended power, dealing with disaffected colonial subjects. The sovereign considered the pre-

* Washington’s Works, Vol. II. p. 401. In making this citation and to spare the necessity of multiplying similar references, I would here acknowledge my obligations to Mr. Sparks’ invaluable collection of the Writings of Washington, particularly to the Appendix to the second volume, for the greater portion of the historical materials made use of in this Address.

rogatives of majesty invaded. The crisis was beyond the grasp of common minds. The government and people of England,—and perhaps I should add the people of America,—were unconscious that a state of things existed vastly transcending the sphere of ordinary politics. The heavens were full of the gathered and condensed elements of power and resistance, that had long been going up from the land and the water on both sides of the Atlantic. The clouds at length were overcharged; art could not draw down nor the breath of conciliation scatter the slumbering fires;—nor kings nor cabinets avert the explosion.

It was not possible, that the great controversy should be settled, by any ordinary mode of adjustment. A change in the British constitution, by which the colonies should have been admitted to a full representation in parliament, would probably have restored harmony. But this was rejected even by the most enlightened friends of America in the British parliament. After alternate measures of inadequate conciliation and feeble and irritating coercion, the sword is drawn. The wound of which Chatham spoke,—the *vulnus immedicabile*, the wound for which in all the British Gilead there was not one drop of balm,—the wound, which a child, a madman, a thoughtless moment might inflict, and did inflict,—a wretched project to knock the trunnions off a half a dozen iron six-pounders, and throw a few barrels of flour into the river at Concord,—this incurable wound, which not parliaments, nor ministers,

nor kings to the end of time could heal,—is struck. When the sun went down, on the eighteenth of April, 1775, England and America, inflamed as they were, might yet, under a great and generous constitutional reform, have been led by an infant's hand, in the silken bonds of union. When the sun rose on the nineteenth of April, hooks of steel could not have held them together. And yet, even yet, the hope of an amicable adjustment is not wholly abandoned. The armies of America, under the command of her beloved Washington, are in the field; but near a month after he was appointed, another petition to the King, breathing the warmest spirit of loyalty, was adopted by Congress. But a twelve month passes by,—that petition is unavailing,—war, flagrant war, rages from Carolina to Maine,—the heights of Charlestown had already flowed with blood,—Falmouth is wrapped in flames,—seventeen thousand German troops, in addition to twenty-five thousand British veterans, are organized into an army destined to trample the spirit of the revolution into bloody dust, and the people of America are declared to be out of the protection, though subject to the power of the crown, abandoned to a free hunt, by all the dogs of war. It was then, that the hope of accommodation was abandoned; and the cup of reconciliation, drained to its dregs, was cast away. A son of Massachusetts, to use his own language, “crossed the Rubicon.”

In the measures touching the final renunciation of allegiance to Great Britain, John Adams took the

lead ; the first individual, as it seems to me, who formed and expressed a distinct idea of American Independence. In a letter written in the month of October, 1754, when he was himself but twenty years old, while France and her Indian allies stood, like a wall of fire, against the progress of the Americans westward, he predicted the expulsion of the French from the continent, and the establishment of an independent government, on the basis of the union of the colonies, fortified by a controlling naval power. Such was the vision of Adams, before the open commencement of the war, which removed the French from the continent ; long before the new financial policy of Great Britain had woke the thunders of James Otis and Patrick Henry ; twenty-one years before the blood of Lexington was shed. For twenty-one years, at least, John Adams had cherished the vision of Independence. He had seen one war fought through, in singular accordance with the destiny he had foretold for his country. He had caught and fanned the first sparks of patriotic disaffection. His tongue,—his pen, in thoughts that breathe and words that burn, had discoursed to the understandings and hearts of his fellow citizens. He had spurned the bribes of office ; he had burst the bonds of friendship ; and identifying himself, as well he might, with his beloved country, he had said to the friend of his heart,—who unhappily differed from him in politics,—in the moment of their last separation : “ I know that Great Britain has determined on her system, and that very fact determines

me on mine. You know that I have been constant and uniform in opposition to all her measures. The die is now cast; I have passed the Rubicon; swim or sink; live or die, with my country is my unalterable determination."

On the sixth of May, 1776, John Adams moved a resolution, in Congress, that the colonies, which had not already done so, should establish independent systems of government; and this resolution, after having been strenuously debated for nine days, passed. The deed was done,—but the principle must be asserted. On the seventh of June, by previous concert, resolutions to that effect were moved by Richard Henry Lee, of Virginia, and seconded by John Adams of Massachusetts. They were debated in committee of the whole on Saturday the eighth, and again on Monday the tenth, on which last day, the first resolution was reported to the House, in the following form; "That these united colonies are and of right ought to be, free and independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown; and that all political connexion between them and the state of Great Britain is and ought to be totally dissolved." The final decision of this resolution was postponed till the first day of July, but in the meanwhile it was, with characteristic simplicity, resolved, in order "*that no time be lost*, in case the Congress agree thereto, that a committee be appointed to prepare a Declaration, to the effect of the first resolution." The following day, a committee of five was chosen. Richard Henry Lee,

who had moved the resolutions for Independence, and would of course have been placed at the head of the committee, had been obliged, by sickness in his family, to go home, and Thomas Jefferson, of Virginia, the youngest member of the Congress, was elected first on the committee in his place. John Adams stood second on the committee; the other members were Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Chancellor Livingston. Jefferson and Adams were, by their brethren on the committee, deputed to draw the Declaration, and the immortal work was performed by Jefferson. Meantime the Resolution had not yet been voted in Congress. The first day of July came, and at the request of a colony, the decision was postponed till the following day. On that day, July the second, it passed. The discussion of the declaration continued for that and the following day. On the third of July, John Adams wrote to his wife, in the following memorable strain; "Yesterday the greatest question was decided, which was ever debated in America; and greater perhaps never was or will be decided among men. A resolution was passed, without one dissenting colony,—That these United States are and of right ought to be, free and independent States. In another letter the same day, he wrote, "The day is passed: the second of July, 1776, will be a memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe it will be celebrated by succeeding generations, as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the *Day of Deliverance*, by solemn acts of devo-

tion to Almighty God. It ought to be solemnized with pomp, shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bon-fires, and illuminations from one end of the continent to the other, from this time forward forever. You will think me transported with enthusiasm; but I am not. I am well aware of the toil, blood and treasure, that it will cost to maintain this declaration, and support and defend these States; yet through all the gloom I can see rays of light and glory; I can see that the end is worth more than all the means; that posterity will triumph, although you and I may rue, which I hope we shall not."

On the following day, the fourth, the Declaration was formally adopted by Congress, and proclaimed to the world;—the most important document in the political history of nations. As the day on which this solemn manifesto was made public, rather than that on which the resolution was adopted in private, was deemed the proper date of the country's independence, the Fourth of July has been consecrated as the National Anniversary; and will thus be celebrated, with patriotic zeal and pious gratitude, by the citizens of America, to the end of time.

Such it was ever regarded,—as such, for half a century, it had been hailed throughout the Union, in conformity with the prediction of the illustrious Adams. But what new sanctity did it not acquire, when nine years ago, and on the fiftieth return of the auspicious anniversary, it pleased Heaven to signalize it, by the most remarkable and touching Providence, which merely human history records!

Who among us, Fellow Citizens, of years to comprehend the event, but felt an awe-struck sense of direct interposition, when told that Jefferson and Adams,—one the author of the immortal Declaration,—the other his immediate associate in preparing it,—“the Colossus who sustained it in debate,” had departed this life together on the day, which their united act had raised into an era in the history of the world! Whose heart was not touched at beholding these patriarchs,—after all their joint labors,—their lofty rivalry,—their passing collisions,—their returning affections,—their long enjoyment of the blessings they had done so much to procure for their country,—closing their eventful career, on that day, which they would themselves have chosen as their last,—that day which the kindest friend could not have wished them to survive!

This is the day, Fellow Citizens of Beverly, which we have met to commemorate;—which you have done me the honor,—an humble stranger, known but to a very few of you,—to invite me to join you in celebrating. Had I looked only to my personal convenience, I could have found a justification for excusing myself from the performance of the duty you have assigned me. Had I followed my strong inclination, I should have been a listener to-day. A single consideration has induced me to obey your call; and that is, that it proceeds from my fellow citizens, without distinction of party. I have ever been of opinion, that the anniversary of our National Independence is never so properly celebra-

ted, as when it brings us all together, as members of one great family. Our beloved and venerated Washington, in his farewell address, has declared party spirit to be "the worst enemy" of a popular government, and that "the effort ought to be, by the force of public opinion, to mitigate and assuage it."

It is of little avail to agitate the question, whether the existence of parties, in a free state, is an unmingled evil, or an evil in some measure compensated by a mixture of good. It is unavailing, because it may be taken for granted, that, in all free states,—in all countries in which representative governments exist, and places of honor, trust, and emolument are elective, where the press is free, and thought is free, and speech is free,—there parties must and will arise, by the very necessity of our nature. They cannot be avoided, while the state remains a free one;—and no force or influence could be applied to control them, that would not be, at the same time, destructive of liberty. There are no parties in Turkey and none in China, though there are frequent rebellions in both. There were no parties in France under Louis XIV. But wherever the constitution gives to the people a share in the government,—there parties spring up, under the influence of the different interests, opinions, and passions of men. The zeal and violence, with which the party controversies are waged, will depend on the habits and temper of the people; the nature of the questions at stake;—the mode in which they are

decided ;—the facility, with which the will of the majority takes effect. In some countries, the dissensions of party have been kept almost always within comparatively reasonable limits ; and have never or rarely proceeded so far, as to endanger the peace of society ; shake the security of property ;—or bring over the community the terrors of bloodshed and civil war. In other countries, the operation of causes too numerous to be detailed has made the pages of their domestic annals a bloody record of violence and crime, of remorseless and maddening convulsions, in which peace, property, and life have made common shipwreck.

In our own country, and in that from which, for the most part, we are descended,—but especially in our own country,—party dissensions have probably been attended with as little evil, as is compatible with the frailty of our natures. It is generally admitted, that the opposite parties have acted as watchful sentinels of each other. It would not be easy to point out any free country in history, where so few of those deplorable acts of violence, which go to the destruction of peace and life,—which constitute that most frightful of all despotisms,—a *reign of terror*,—are set down to the reproach of a people. It has never happened in New England,—and God grant it never may happen,—that lawless assemblages,—inflamed by party rage,—have encountered each other with murderous weapons in the streets ; and never, that a triumphant faction, feeling power and forgetting right, has made the sword of

public justice to wreak the vengeance of party feeling.

Many causes might be assigned for an effect, which is so honorable to the character of the people, and which has contributed so much to the prosperity of the country. I take it a main cause has been the thoroughly popular organization of the government and the frequent recurrence of the elections. When the majority of the people, at regularly returning periods of one, two, four or six years have it in their power to bestow, wherever they please, all the places of trust and power, there is little temptation to proceed by violence, against the opposite party. There is no need of resorting to banishment or the scaffold, to displace an obnoxious ruler or an odious opponent, when a single twelvemonth will reduce him to the level of the rest of the community. It is true the community is kept agitated and excited; but it is not kept armed. Electioneering takes the place of all the other forms and manifestations of party spirit;—and though the paroxysm of a contested election is not in itself a condition of society favorable to its peace or prosperity; it is far better than cruel hereditary feuds and bloody contests of rival states, like those which stain the annals of ancient Greece, and of the Italian Republics.

Other causes that assuage the violence of party, are the general diffusion of knowledge and the multiplication of liberal pursuits.—Ignorance is the hot-bed of party prejudice, and party detraction. A people who read little, and that little exclusively the

production of the partizan press, may be grossly duped as to the condition and interests of the country,—the designs and actions of parties,—and the characters of men. But an enlightened people, whose minds are stored with knowledge,—who read, observe, and reflect;—who know the history of the country, and as a portion of it the history of parties, instead of being a prey to the exaggerated statements of the political press, form an independent opinion of men and things, and are able to correct mistatements and rejudge prejudices. The well-informed mind has other objects of interest and pursuit. In proportion to the intelligence of a community, will be the diversity of its occupations and the variety of the objects, which invite and receive the attention of active minds. Political interests are less keenly pursued in such a community, than where they form the almost exclusive object of attention. Other great questions connected with religious and moral improvement, social progress, the cause of education, and the advancement of the elegant and useful arts engage the thoughts of the active and the inquisitive. These liberal pursuits bring those together, whom politics separate; and shew men that their opponents are neither the knaves nor the fools, they might otherwise have thought them.

But especially the spirit of patriotism may be looked to, as the great corrective of party spirit. Whatsoever revives the recollections of exploits and sacrifices, of which all share the pride as all partake the benefits,—the memory of the pilgrim fath-

ers and revolutionary patriots,—the common glories of the American name,—serves to moderate the growing bitterness of party animosity. The unkind feelings kindled by present struggles are subdued, by the generous emotions with which we contemplate the glorious events of our history and the illustrious characters, with which it is adorned.—It is scarcely possible for men, who have just united in an act of patriotic commemoration;—who have repeated to each other with mutual pride, the names of a common ancestry;—who have trod together the field of some great and decisive struggle,—who have assembled to join in recalling the merits of some friend and ornament of his country,—to go away and engage with unmitigated rancor, in the work of party defamation. The spirit of party which yields nothing to these humanizing influences is not the laudable spirit of political independence, but malignant and selfish passion;—and that patriotism, which expires in wordy commendation of the acts or principles of our forefathers, without softening the asperities, which exist between their children at the present day, is hollow-hearted pretence.

Of all the occasions rightfully redeemed from the contamination of party feeling and consecrated to union, harmony, and patriotic affection the day we celebrate stands first,—for on what day *can* we meet as brothers, if the fourth of July sunders us as partizans? It is an occasion, toward which no man and no party can feel indifferent;—in which no man and no party can arrogate an exclusive interest;

for which every American citizen, in proportion as he has sense to perceive the blessings which have fallen to his lot, and sagacity to mark the connection of the Independence of America with the progress of liberty throughout the world, must feel the same profound reverence. It is for this reason, that I ever rejoice when it is proposed to celebrate the Fourth of July, without distinction of party; for this reason, that on this day,—and I hope not on this day alone,—I have a hand of fellowship and a heart warm with kind feeling, for every patriotic brother of the great American family. I would devote this day not to the discussion of topics, which divide the people, but to the memory of the events and of the men, which unite their affections. I would call up, in the most imposing recollection, the venerated images of our patriotic ancestors. I would strive to place myself in the actual presence of that circle of sages, whose act has immortalized the day.—As they rise one by one to the eye of a grateful imagination, my heart bows down at the sight of their venerable features, their grey hairs, and their honorable scars: and every angry feeling settles into reverence and love.

It has seemed to me, fellow citizens, that I could select no topic more appropriate to the occasion,—none more in harmony with the spirit of the day and the feelings, which have led you to unite in celebrating it,—than the character of Washington. Considered as the great military leader of the Revolution, it is admitted, on every side, that his agency

in establishing the Independence of the Country, was more important than that of any other individual.—It is not less certain, that, but for the co-öperation of Washington in the federal convention, and the universal understanding that he was to fill the Chief Magistracy, under the new government, the Constitution of these United States would not have been adopted.—Let me not seem unjust to others. The perils and trials of the times,—the voice of a bleeding country,—the high tone of public feeling,—the sympathy of an astonished and delighted age,—the manifest indications of a providential purpose to raise up a new state in the family of nations, called into action a rare assemblage of wise, courageous, and patriotic men.—To numbers of them the meed of well deserved applause, has been, and in all time will be, gratefully accorded.—My own poor voice has never been silent in their praise, and when hushed on that theme, may it never be listened to, on any other. But of Washington alone it has been said, with an aptitude, which all feel, and an emphasis, which goes to the heart, that he was “First in War, First in Peace, and First in the Hearts of his Countrymen.”

Nor let it be thought, Fellow-citizens, that this is an exhausted subject. It can never be exhausted, while the work of his hands,—the monuments of his achievements,—and the fruits of his counsels remain. On the contrary, it is a subject, which every age will study under new lights; which has enduring relations not only with the fortunes of America,

but the general cause of liberty. I have, within a few weeks, seen an official declaration of General Santander, the enlightened chief magistrate of the Republic of New Grenada, in which he avows his intention to decline a re-election, and assigns the example of Washington as the cause.—I do not believe it within the compass of the most active imagination, to do full justice to the effect on mankind of having embodied, in the conspicuous living illustration of the character of Washington, the great principles, which should govern the conduct of a patriotic chief magistrate, in a representative government. For myself, I am well persuaded, that the present generation is better able to do justice to this character, than that in which he lived.—We behold it more nearly than our predecessors, entire, in all its parts. We approach it, free from the prejudices, of which, under the influence of the passions of the day, even the purest and most illustrious men are the subjects while they live. Every day furnishes new proofs of the importance of his services, in their connection with American Liberty ;—and I am sure, that instead of sinking into comparative obscurity, with the lapse of time, the character of Washington, a century hence, will be the subject of a warmer and a more general enthusiasm, on the part of the friends of liberty, than at the present day. The great points in his character are living centres of a self-diffusive moral influence, which is daily taking effect, and which is destined still more widely to

control the minds and excite the imaginations of men.

It is, in all cases, difficult for contemporaries, or the next generation, to do full justice to the riches of a character, destined to command the respect of all time. It is a part of the character, that it contained within it qualities so true, that, while they conflict perhaps with the interests, passions, and prejudices of the day, they justify themselves in the great experience of ages. The planets, as we behold them, are sometimes stationary, and sometimes seem to retrograde. But it is only to the imperfect sense of man, that they stand still and move backward; while in reality they are ever rolling in majesty along their orbits, and will be found, at the appointed season, to have compassed the heavens. Instead of expecting at once to sound the depths of a character like Washington's, it requires all our study and all our vigilance, not to measure such a character, on the scale of our own littleness; not to estimate it from a partial developement of its influence. A great character, founded on the living rock of principle, is in fact not a solitary phenomenon to be at once perceived, limited, and described. It is a dispensation of providence, designed to have not merely an immediate, but a continuous, progressive, and never-ending agency. It survives the man who possessed it; survives his age,—perhaps his country,—his language. These, in the lapse of time, may disappear and be forgotten. Governments, tribes of men, chase each other, like the shadows of summer

clouds, on a plain. But an earthly immortality belongs to a great and good character. History embalms it; it lives in its moral influence; in its authority; in its example; in the memory of the words and deeds, in which it was manifested; and as every age adds to the illustrations of its efficacy, it may chance to be the best understood, by a remote posterity.

There is, however, but a single point of view, in which the limits of the occasion will allow me to dwell on this great theme, more suitable for a volume than the address of an hour;—and that is, *the early formation of the character of Washington*. It must have occurred to you all, in reading the history of the Revolution, that from the period, at which Washington assumed the chief command, he was not merely the head of the army, but to all practical purposes, the chief magistrate of the country. Congress in fact conferred on him, by one of their resolutions, powers, that may without exaggeration be called *dictatorial*. The point then, on which I would dwell, is this, that it was absolutely necessary for the prosperous issue of the Revolution,—*not*, that a character like Washington's, perfectly qualified for the duties of the camp and the council, should have gradually formed itself; this would not have sufficed for the salvation of the country, in the critical, embarrassed,—often disastrous state of affairs. It was necessary, *not*, that, after having for some years languished or struggled on, beneath incompetent, unsuccessful, unpopular, and perhaps faithless

chieftains, the country should at last have found her Washington, when her spirit was broken,—her resources exhausted,—her character discredited,—her allies disgusted,—in short, when Washington himself could not have saved her. No, it strikes the reflecting mind to have been necessary, absolutely necessary, at the very outset of the contest, to have a leader possessed of all the qualities, which were actually found in him. He cannot be waited for, even if by being waited for, he was sure to be found. The organization of the army may be a work of difficulty and time,—the plan of confederation may drag tardily along,—the finances may plunge from one desperate expedient to another,—expedition after expedition may fail; but it is manifestly indispensable that, from the first, there should be one safe governing mind, one clear unclouded intellect, one resolute will, one pure and patriotic heart,—placed at the head of affairs, by common consent. One such character there must be, for the very reason that all other resources are wanting;—and with one such character, all else in time will be supplied. The storm sails may fly in ribbons to the wind; mast and top-mast may come down,—and every billow of the ocean boil through the gaping seams;—and the brave ship, by the blessing of heaven, may yet ride out the tempest. But if, when the winds, in all their fury, are beating upon her, and the black and horrid rocks of a lee shore are already hanging over the deck, and all other hope and dependence fail, if then the chain-cable gives way, she must,

with all on board, be dashed to pieces. I own I regard it, though but a single view of the character of Washington, as one of transcendent importance, that the commencement of the Revolution found him already prepared and mature for the work; and that on the day, on which his commission was signed by John Hancock,—the immortal seventeenth of June, 1775,—a day on which Providence kept an even balance with the cause, and while it took from us a Warren gave us a Washington,—he was just as consummate a leader for peace or for war, as when, eight years after, he resigned that commission at Annapolis.

His father, a Virginia gentleman in moderate circumstances of fortune, died when George Washington was but ten years old. His surviving parent,—a woman fit to be the mother of Washington,—bestowed the tenderest care upon the education of her oldest and darling son; and instilled into his mind those moral and religious principles, that love of order, and what is better, that love of justice, and devout reliance on Providence, which formed the basis of his character. His elder brother Lawrence, the child of a former marriage, was a captain in the British army. He was ordered with his company to Jamaica in 1741, and was present at the capture of Porto Bello and at the disastrous attack on Cartagena, to which the poet Thompson so pathetically alludes in the Seasons. In honor of Admiral Vernon; who commanded those expeditions, Captain Lawrence Washington gave the name of Mount Vernon

to the beautiful estate, which he purchased on the banks of the Potomac, and which at his death he bequeathed to his brother George. Influenced no doubt by the example of his brother, but led by his advice to engage in the other branch of the service, George Washington, at the age of fourteen years, sought and obtained a midshipman's warrant in the British navy. Shall he engage in this branch of the military service, on which his heart is bent? Shall his feet quit the firm soil of his country? Shall he enter a line of duty and promotion, in which, if he escape the hazards and gain the prizes of his career, he can scarce fail to be carried to distant scenes,—to bestow his energies on foreign expeditions, in remote seas, perhaps in another hemisphere; in which he will certainly fail of the opportunity of preparing himself in the camp and field of the approaching war, to command the armies of the Revolution; and not improbably sink under the pestilential climate of the West Indies and the Spanish Main? Such indeed seems almost inevitably his career. He desires it; his brother, standing in the place of a parent, approves it; the warrant is obtained. But nothing could overcome the invincible repugnance of his widowed mother. She saw only the dangers, which awaited the health, the morals, and the life of her favorite child,—and her influence prevailed. Thus the voice of his high destiny first spoke to the affections of the youthful hero, through the fond yearnings of a mother's heart. He abandoned his commission, remained beneath the paternal roof, and was saved to the country.

The early education of Washington was confined to those branches of useful knowledge commonly taught in English Grammar schools. But he soon entered upon a course of practical education ; singularly adapted to form him for his future career. He is to lead an active and a laborious life, and he must carry to it a healthy frame. Destined for the command of armies, to direct the movement and the supply of troops,—to select the routes of march and the points of attack and defence,—to wrestle with privation, hunger, and the elements ;—raised up, above all, to perform the part of a great and patriotic chieftain, in the revolutionary councils of a new country, where the primeval forest had just begun to yield to the settler's axe, and most of the institutions of society, and the thoughts and prejudices of a good part of the population are those of an early stage of improvement and, so to express it, to some extent, of frontier life ;—with this destiny, how shall he be educated ? A great extent and variety of literary accomplishments are evidently not the things most required.

It is impossible to read the account of his early years, without feeling that he was thrown upon an occupation, which, without carrying on its outside any thing particularly attractive to a young man, able to indulge his taste in the choice of a pursuit, was unquestionably of all pursuits, the best adapted to form the youthful Washington. At the period when he came forward into life, the attention of men of adventure in Virginia, had begun to turn toward the occupation of the regions west of the blue ridge and Alleghany mountains ;—a region

now filled with a dense population, with all the works of human labor, and all the bounties of a productive soil; then shaded with the native forest,—infested with its savage inhabitants, and claimed as the domain of France. The enterprize of the English colonists of the Atlantic coast, was beginning to move boldly forward into the interior. The destiny of the Anglo-Saxon race, transplanted to this continent, had too long awaited its fulfilment. The character of Virginia, as well as of several other of the colonies, extended from sea to sea;—but of the broad region, which lay to the south and east of the Ohio, a country as highly favored of nature, as any on which heaven sends rain and sunshine, the comparative narrow belt to the east of the blue ridge was all, that was yet occupied by compact settlements. But the bold huntsman had followed the deer to the upper waters of the Potomac; and trapped the beaver in his still, hereditary pool, among the western slopes of the Alleghany. The intrepid woodsman, in a few instances, had fixed his log-cabin on the fertile meadows which are watered by the tributaries of the Ohio. Their reports of the riches of the unoccupied region excited the curiosity of their countrymen, and just as Washington was passing from boyhood to youth, the enterprize and capital of Virginia were seeking a new field for exercise and investment, in the unoccupied public domain beyond the mountains. The business of a surveyor immediately became one of great importance and trust, for no surveys were executed by the government. To this occupation, the youthful Washington, not yet sixteen years of

age, and well furnished with the requisite mathematical knowledge, zealously devoted himself. Some of his family connections possessed titles to large portions of public land, which he was employed with them in surveying. Thus, at a period of life, when, in a more quiet and advanced stage of society, the intelligent youth is occupied in the elementary studies of the schools and colleges, Washington was running the surveyor's chain, through the fertile vallies of the blue ridge and the Alleghany mountains; passing days and weeks in the wilderness, beneath the shadow of eternal forests;—listening to the voice of the waterfalls, which man's art had not yet set to the healthful music of the saw-mill or the trip-hammer;—reposing from the labors of the day on a bear-skin, with his feet to the blazing logs of a camp-fire; and sometimes startled from the deep slumbers of careless hard-working youth, by the alarm of the Indian war whoop. This was the gymnastic school, in which Washington was brought up; in which his quick glance was formed, destined to range hereafter across the battle-field, through clouds of smoke and bristling rows of bayonets;—the school in which his senses, weaned from the taste for those detestable indulgencies miscalled pleasures, in which the flower of adolescence so often languishes and pines away, were early braced up to that sinewy manhood, which becomes the

Lord of the Lion heart and Eagle eye.

There is preserved, among the papers of Washington, a letter written to a friend, while he was engaged on his first surveying tour, and when he

was consequently but sixteen years of age. I quote a sentence from it, in spite of the homeliness of the details, for which I like it the better, and because I wish to set before you, not an ideal hero wrapped in cloudy generalities and a mist of vague panegyric, but the real, identical man, with all the peculiarities of his life and occupation. "Your letter," says he "gave me the more pleasure, as I received it among barbarians and an uncouth set of people. Since you received my letter of October last, I have not slept above three or four nights in a bed; but after walking a good deal all the day, I have lain down before the fire, upon a little hay, straw, fodder, or a bear-skin, whichever was to be had,—with man, wife, and children, like dogs and cats; and happy is he who gets the berth nearest the fire. Nothing would make it pass off tolerably, but a good reward. A doubloon is my constant gain every day, that the weather will permit my going out, and sometimes six pistoles. The coldness of the weather will not allow of my making a long stay, as the lodging is rather too cold for the time of year. I have never had my clothes off, but have lain and slept in them, except the few nights I have been in Fredericksburg." If there is an individual in the morning of life, in this assembly, who has not yet made his choice, between the flowery path of indulgence and the rough ascent of honest industry,—if there is one, who is ashamed to get his living by any branch of honest labor,—let him reflect, that the youth, who was carrying the theodolite and surveyor's chain, through the mountain passes of the Allegha-

nies, in the month of March,—sleeping on a bundle of hay, before the fire, in a settler's log-cabin, and not ashamed to boast that he did it, for his doubloon a day, is George Washington;—that the life he led trained him up to command the armies of United America;—that the money he earned was the basis of that fortune, which enabled him afterwards to bestow his services, without reward, on a bleeding and impoverished country!

For three years was the young Washington employed, the greater part of the time, and whenever the season would permit, in this laborious and healthful occupation;—and I know not if it would be deemed unbecoming, were a thoughtful student of our history to say, that he could almost hear the voice of Providence, in the language of Milton, announce its high purpose:—

To exercise him in the wilderness;—
There he shall first lay down the rudiments
Of his great warfare, ere I send him forth
To conquer!

At this period, the military service, in all countries, was sorely infested by a loathsome disease, not known to the ancients,—supposed to have been generated in some pestilential region of the East;—and brought back to Europe by the Crusaders, an ample revenge for the desolation of Asia.—Long since robbed of its terrors, by the sublime discovery of Jenner, it is now hardly known, except by the memory of its ravages.—But before the middle of the last century, it rarely happened that a large body

of troops was brought together, without the appearance among them of this terrific malady, whose approach was more dreaded, often more destructive, than that of the foe. Shortly before the career of Washington commenced, this formidable disease had been brought within the control of human art, by the practice of inoculation, which was introduced into England from Turkey, by the wife of the British Ambassador, and into this neighborhood, by Dr. Zabdiel Boylston, in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.—An unfortunate prejudice, however, arose in many minds against the practice of inoculation. It was believed to be an unwarrantable tempting of Providence, voluntarily to take into the frame so dangerous a disease.—In many places, its introduction was resisted by all the force of popular prejudice and sometimes of popular violence, and in the colony of Virginia, it was prohibited by law. At the age of nineteen, George Washington accompanied his elder brother already mentioned, and whose health was now infirm, to the island of Barbadoes. Here he was attacked by this terrific malady, in the natural way; but skilful medical attendance was at hand, the climate mild, the season favorable, and on the twenty-fifth day, from the commencement of the disease, he had passed through it in safety. He was thus, before his military career commenced, placed beyond the reach of danger from this cause.—In the very first campaign of the Revolutionary War, the small pox was one of the most dangerous enemies, with which the troops under Washington were obliged to contend. It broke out in the British

army in Boston, and was believed by General Washington, to have been propagated in the American camp, by persons purposely inoculated and sent into the American lines. However this might be, it was necessary to subject the American army to the process of inoculation, at a period when, destitute as they were of powder, an attack was daily expected from the royal army. But the beloved commander was safe.

The time had now arrived, when the military education of Washington, properly so called, was to commence. And in the circumstances of this portion of his life, if I am not greatly deceived, will be found a connection of the character and conduct of this illustrious man, with the fortunes and prospects of his country, which cannot be too much admired, nor too gratefully acknowledged. The struggle between the governments of France and England, for the exclusive possession of the American continent, was a principal source of the European wars of the last century. The successes of each contest furnished new subjects of jealousy, and peace was but a cessation of arms, preparatory to another struggle. The English colonies, favored by the maritime superiority of the mother country, had possessed themselves of the Atlantic shore. The French adventurers, who excelled in the art of gaining the affection of the aborigines, having entrenched themselves at the mouth of the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi, aimed by a chain of posts through the whole interior, at all events to prevent the progress of the English westward, and as circumstances

should favor the design, to confine them within constantly reduced limits ;—ultimately, if possible, to bring the whole coast into subjection to France. This struggle retarded for a century the progress of civilization on this continent. During that period, it subjected the whole line of the frontier to all the horrors of a remorseless border and savage war.—It resulted at last in the entire expulsion of the French from the continent ; in the reduction of the British dominion to a portion of that territory, which had been wrested from the French ; and in the establishment of the Independence of the United States of America. Every thing preceding the year 1748, when the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle was concluded, may be considered as preliminary to that grand series of events, which makes the day we celebrate an era in the history of the world, and in which the first part was performed by Washington.

Previous to this period, the fertile region west of the Alleghany mountains, and now containing near a third part of the population of the United States, was unoccupied by civilized man. In the western part of Pennsylvania and Virginia, in Kentucky and all the States directly south of it, in the entire region north west of the Ohio and west of the Mississippi, there did not, less than ninety years ago, arise the smoke of a single hamlet, in which the white man dwelt. On the return of peace between France and England, in the year 1748, —the Ohio company was formed. Its object was the occupation and settlement of the fertile district south east of the Ohio and west of the Alleghany

mountain. It consisted of a small number of gentlemen in Virginia and Maryland, with one associate in London, Mr. Thomas Hanbury, a distinguished merchant of that city. The elder brothers of George Washington were actively engaged in the enterprize. A grant of five hundred acres of land was obtained from the crown, and the company were obliged by the terms of the grant, to introduce a hundred families into the settlement within seven years, to build a fort, and provide a garrison adequate to its defence. Out of this small germ of private enterprize, sprung the old French war, and by no doubtful chain of cause and effect, the war of American Independence.

| The Ohio Company proceeded to execute the conditions of the grant. Preparations for opening a trade with the Indians were commenced,—a road across the mountains was laid out, substantially on the line of the present national road, and an agent was sent to conciliate the Indian tribes, on the subject of the new settlement. In 1752, the tribes entered into a treaty with the Virginia commissioners, in which they agreed not to molest any settlements, which might be formed by the company on the south eastern side of the Ohio. On the faith of this compact, twelve families of adventurers from Virginia headed by Captain Gist, immediately established themselves, on the banks of the Monongahela.

The French colonial authorities in Canada viewed these movements with jealousy. Although great Britain and France had lately concluded a treaty of

peace, emissaries were sent from Canada to the Indians on the Ohio, to break up the friendly relations just established with Virginia. Some of the traders were seized and sent to France; and by order of the French ministry, a fort was immediately commenced on Buffalo River, as a position, from which the Indians could be controlled and the Virginians held in check. These proceedings were promptly reported to Gov. Dinwiddie, by the agents of the Ohio company; and the Governor immediately determined to make them the subject of remonstrance to the commandant of the French fort.

To transmit such a remonstrance from Williamsburg in Virginia to the shores of lake Erie, was, in the state of the country at that time, no easy matter. A distance of three or four hundred miles was to be travelled, the greater part of the way through a wilderness. Mountains were to be climbed and rivers crossed. Tribes of savages were to be passed, by the way; and all the hazards of an unfriendly Indian frontier, in a state of daily increasing irritation, were to be encountered.—To all these difficulties the season of the year, (it was now the month of November,) added obstacles all but insuperable.—It is scarcely matter of reproach therefore, that the mission was declined, by those, to whom Governor Dinwiddie at first tendered it.

But there was one at hand, by whom no undertaking was ever declined, however severe or perilous, which was enjoined by duty, or which promised benefit to the country. On his return from Barbadoes in 1752, George Washington then in the

twentieth year of his age, received his commission as adjutant of militia in the northern neck of Virginia. The colony was divided into four military districts, the following year, and Washington received the same appointment in one of them. An expectation of approaching hostilities prevailed, and the militia were every where drilled, as in preparation for actual service.—In this state of things, Governor Dinwiddie proposed to Major Washington, to undertake the mission to the French commandant.—Washington had just received by bequest the fine estate of Mount Vernon; but he accepted the tendered appointment with alacrity, and started on his journey the following day.

At the frontier settlements on the Monongahela above alluded to, he was joined by Captain Gist, an intelligent and brave pioneer of civilization, and by some Indians of rank in their tribe, who were to add their remonstrances to those of the Governor of Virginia. After encountering all the hardships of the season and the wilderness, and various embarrassments arising from the policy of the French, Washington penetrated to their post and performed his errand. On the return of the party, their horses failed, from the inclemency of the weather and the severity of the march; and Washington and his companion Gist, (left by their friendly Indians), with their packs on their shoulders and guns in their hands, were compelled to make the dreary journey on foot. They were soon joined by Indians in the French interest, who had dogged them, ever since they left the French fort. One of them exerted all

the arts of savage cunning, to get possession of the arms of Washington, and lead him and his companion astray in the forest. Baffled by their wariness and self-possession, and when he perceived them, at night-fall, worn down, by the fatigue of the march, the savage turned deliberately, and at a distance of fifteen steps, fired at Washington and his companion. The Indian's rifle missed its aim. Washington and Gist immediately sprang upon and seized him. Gist was desirous of putting him to death, but Washington would not permit his life to be taken, justly forfeited as it was. After detaining him to a late hour, they allowed him to escape; and pursued their own journey, worn and weary as they were, through the live-long watches of a December night.

Well knowing that the savages were on their trail, they dared not stop, till they reached the Alleghany, a clear and rapid stream, which they hoped to be able to cross on the ice;—the only poor consolation which they promised themselves from the stinging severity of the weather. The river unfortunately was neither frozen across nor open;—but fringed with broken ice for fifty yards on each shore, and the middle stream filled with cakes of ice, furiously drifting down the current. With one poor hatchet, to use Washington's own expression, they commenced the construction of a raft. It was a weary day's work, and not completed till sunset. They launched it upon the stream, but were soon so surrounded and crushed, by drifting masses of ice, that they expected every moment, that their raft would go to pieces, and they themselves perish. Washington

put out his pole to stop the raft, till the fields of ice should float by; but the raft was driven forward so furiously upon his pole, that he himself holding to the pole, was violently thrown into the river, where it was ten feet deep. He saved his life by clinging to a log, but unable to force the raft to either shore, Washington and his companion left it, and passed the night, on an island in the middle of the river. So intense was the cold, that the hands and feet of Captain Gist, hardy and experienced woodsman as he was, were frozen. Happily, however, they were enabled, on the following morning, to cross to the opposite bank of the river, on the ice,—a circumstance which no doubt saved them from the tomahawk of the unfriendly Indians.

Such was the commencement of the public services of the youthful hero, as related with admirable simplicity by himself, in his journal of the expedition. That of his companion Gist, though never yet printed, is still preserved;* and states, much more particularly than it is done by Washington, the murderous attempt of the Indian. Such was the journey undertaken by Washington at a season of the year, when the soldier goes into quarters,—in a state of weather, when the huntsman shrinks from the inclemency of the skies; amidst perils, from which his escape was all but miraculous: and this too not by a pennyless adventurer, fighting his way, through desperate risks, to promotion and bread; but by a young man, already known most advanta-

* It will appear in the next volume of the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

geously in the community, and who, by his own honorable industry and the bequest of a deceased brother, was already in possession of a fortune. In this his first official step, taken at the age of twenty-one, Washington displayed a courage, resolution, prudence, disinterestedness, and fortitude, on a small scale, though at the risk of his life, which never afterwards failed to mark his conduct. He seemed to spring at once into public life, considerate, wary, and fearless; and that Providence, which destined him for other and higher duties, manifestly extended a protecting shield over his beloved head.

The answer of the French commandant to the remonstrance of the Governor of Virginia was evasive and unsatisfactory. A regiment was immediately enlisted; Major Washington, on the ground of youth and inexperience, declined being a candidate for the place of colonel, but solicited and accepted the second command. He hasten with two companies to the scene of action, beyond the Alleghanies; and by the death of Col. Fry, was soon left in full command of the regiment. He had never served a campaign nor faced an enemy. The French and Indians were in force on the Ohio. They had already commenced the erection of fort Duquesne, on the site of Pittsburg; and hearing of the approach of Washington sent forward a detachment of French and Indians, to reconnoitre his position. Informed by friendly Indians of the secret advance of this detachment, Washington, who was never taken by surprise, forced a march upon them in the night; and overtook them in their place of concealment. A skir-

mish ensued, in which, with the loss of one man killed and two or three wounded, the party of French and Indians were defeated; ten of them being killed including their commander Jumonville, and twenty-one made prisoners.

This bold advance, however, was necessarily followed by a hasty retreat. The regiment of Washington counted but three hundred;—the force of the French and Indians exceeded a thousand. Washington reluctantly fell back to *Fort Necessity*, a hasty work on the meadows, at the western base of the mountains, whose name sufficiently shews the feelings, with which the youthful commander found himself compelled to occupy it. Here he entrenched himself and waited for reinforcements. But before they came up, the joint French and Indian army arrived in the neighborhood of the fort. A sharp action took place, on the third of July, 1754, which was kept up the whole day, till late in the evening. The American force was considerably reduced; but the French commander saw, that he had to do with men, who were determined, if pushed to extremities, to sell their lives dear. He proposed a capitulation: a parley was held to settle its terms. A captain in the Virginia regiment, and the only man in it who understood the French language, was sent by Colonel Washington to treat with the French commander. The articles of capitulation drawn up in French, and treacherously assented to by the Virginian captain, contained the assertion, that Jumonville, who, as was just observed, fell in the late skirmish, was *assassinated*. These ar-

ticles were interpreted to Washington at midnight, under a drenching rain, among the wrecks of the battle, amidst heaps of the dead and dying, and after a severe engagement of ten hours. By a base mistranslation of the French word that signifies assassination, Washington was made to subscribe an article, in which the death of Jumonville was called by that revolting name. It was not until his return to Virginia, that this fraud was detected. On the following day, THE FOURTH OF JULY, in virtue of this capitulation, Washington led out the remains of his gallant regiment, grieved but not dishonored. He conducted them with consummate skill, through the ill-restrained bands of Indians, who hovered around his march, and brought them safely to Fort Cumberland. Heaven had in reserve for him a recompense for the disasters of this mournful fourth of July, when, on the return of that day after a lapse of twenty-two years, it found him the Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of Independent and United America.

These incidents aroused the attention of France and England, who yet stood glaring at each other, in an attitude of defiance ; reluctant to plunge again into the horrors of a general war, but deeply conscious that peace could not be preserved. No formal declaration of war was made in Europe, but both governments prepared for vigorous action in America.—Two veteran regiments were sent from Great Britain, destined to dislodge the French from Ohio. They were placed under the command of the brave, head-strong, self-sufficient, and unfortu-

nate Braddock. By an extraordinary fatality of the British councils,—and as if to sow the seeds of division and weakness, at a moment when every nerve of strength required to be strained,—an ordinance for settling the rank of the army was promulgated, in virtue of which, all officers holding British commissions were to take rank of all holding provincial commissions; and provincial general and field officers were to lose their commands, when serving with those commissioned by the crown.—Colonel Washington on the promulgation of this ill-conceived order resigned his commission in disdain;—but to show that no unworthy motive had prompted that step, and happily resolved to persevere in the arduous school of dear-bought experience, he offered his services to General Braddock, as an aid,—and they were gladly accepted.—Washington fell dangerously sick on the march toward the field of slaughter, beyond the mountains;—but consented to be left behind, at the positive instances of the surgeon, only on the solemn pledge of the general, that he should be sent for before an action.

Time would fail me to recount the horrors of the ninth of July 1755. Washington emaciated,—reduced by fatigue and fever,—had joined the army. He implored the ill-starred general to send forward the Virginia Rangers to scour the forest in advance; he besought him to conciliate the Indians. His counsels were unheeded; the wretched commander moved forward to his fate. Washington was often heard to say, in the course of his life-time, that the most beautiful spectacle he had ever witnessed, was

that of the British troops on this eventful morning. The whole detachment was clad in uniform, and moved as in a review, in regular columns, to the sound of martial music. The sun gleamed upon their burnished arms, the placid Monongahela flowed upon their right, and the deep, native forest over-shadowed them with solemn grandeur, on their left.* —It was a bright midsummer's day, and every bosom swelled with the confident expectation of victory. A few hours pass, and the forest rings with the yell of the savage enemy ;—the advance of the British army under Colonel Gage, afterwards the governor of Massachusetts, is driven back on the main body ; —the whole force, panic-struck,—confounded,—and disorganized, after a wild and murderous conflict of three hours, falls a prey to the invisible foe.—They ran before the French and Indians “like sheep before the dogs.” Of eighty-six officers, sixty-one were killed and wounded. The wretched general had four horses shot under him, and received at last his mortal wound, probably from an outraged provincial, in his own army.—The Virginia rangers were the only part of the force, that behaved with firmness ; and the disordered retreat of the British veterans was actually covered by these American militia men.—Washington was the guardian angel of the day.—He was every where, in the hottest of the fight. “I expected every moment,” said Dr. Craik, his friend, “to see him fall.” His voice was the only one, which commanded obedience. Two horses were killed under him, and four bullets passed

* Sparks' writings of Washington, Vol. II. p. 469.

through his garments.—No common fortune preserved his life. Fifteen years after the battle, Washington made a journey to the great Kenhawa, accompanied by Dr. Craik.—While exploring the wilderness, a band of Indians approached them, headed by a venerable chief. He told them, by an interpreter, the errand on which he came. “I come, said he, to behold my great father Washington. I have come a long way, to see him.—I was with the French, in the battle of the Monongahela.—I saw my great father on horseback, in the hottest of the battle. I fired my rifle at him many times, and bade my young men also fire their rifles at him.—But the great spirit turned away the bullets ;—and I saw that my great father could not be killed in battle.”—This anecdote rests on the authority of Dr. Craik, the comrade and friend of Washington, the physician who closed his eyes.—Who needs doubt it? Six balls took effect on his horses and in his garments. Who does not feel the substantial truth of the tradition?—Who, that has a spark of patriotic or pious sentiment in his bosom, but feels an inward assurance that a Heavenly presence overshadowed that field of blood, and preserved the great instrument of future mercies?—Yes, gallant and beloved youth, ride safely as fearlessly through that shower of death! Thou art not destined to fall in the morning of life, in this distant wilderness. That wan and wasted countenance shall yet be lighted up with the sunshine of victory and peace!—The days are coming and the years draw nigh, when thy heart, now bleeding for thy afflicted coun-

try, shall swell with joy, as thou leadest forth her triumphant hosts, from a War of Independence !

From this period, the relation of Washington to his country was sealed. It is evident that his character, conduct, and preservation,—though he was scarcely twenty-three years of age,—had arrested the public attention, and awakened thoughtful anticipations of his career. I confess there is something, which I am unable to fathom, in the hold which he seems already to have gained over the minds and imaginations of men. Never did victorious Consul return to republican Rome, loaded with the spoils of conquered provinces,—with captive thousands at his chariot wheels, an object of greater confidence and respect,—than Washington, at the close of two disastrous campaigns, from one of which he was able to save his regiment, only by a painful capitulation,—in the other, barely escaping with his life and the wrecks of his army. He had formed to himself, on fields of defeat and disaster, a reputation for consummate bravery, conduct, and patriotism.—A sermon was preached to the volunteers of Hanover County, in Virginia, by the Rev. Samuel Davis, afterwards President of Princeton College, in which he uses this memorable language ; “ As a remarkable instance of patriotism, I may point out to the public that heroic youth, Colonel Washington, whom I cannot but hope Providence has hitherto preserved, in so signal a manner, for some important service to his country.”

The entire completion of this extraordinary prediction was of course reserved for a future day, but

from the moment of its utterance its fulfilment began. Terror and havock followed at the heels of Braddock's defeat. The frontier settlements were broken up,—the log-cabins were burned,—their inmates massacred, or driven in dismay across the mountains.—A considerable force was raised in Virginia, and Washington was appointed its Commander-in-chief.—But the councils of England were weak and irresolute, and no efficient general head as yet controlled those of the colonies.—The day star of Pitt was near, but had not yet ascended above the horizon.—Disaster followed disaster, on the frontiers of Virginia, and Washington, for two years and a half, was placed in precisely the position, which he was afterwards to fill in the revolutionary war. A reluctant and undisciplined militia was to be kept embodied by personal influence; without pay, without clothes, without arms.—Sent to defend an extensive mountain frontier with forces wholly inadequate to the object,—the sport of contradictory orders from a civil governor inexperienced in war,—defrauded by contractors,—tormented with arrogant pretensions of subaltern officers in the royal army,—weakened by wholesale desertions in the hour of danger,—misrepresented by jealous competitors,—traded, —maligned,—the youthful Commander-in-chief was obliged to foresee every thing,—to create every thing,—to endure every thing,—to effect every thing, without encouragement, without means, without co-operation. His correspondence during the years 1756, and 1757 is, with due allowances for the difference of the field of opera-

tions, the precise counterpart of that of the revolutionary war, twenty years later.—You see it all,—you see the whole man,—in a letter to Governor Dinwiddie of the 22d April, 1756 :—

“Your honor may see to what unhappy straights the inhabitants and myself are reduced. I am too little acquainted, Sir, with pathetic language, to attempt a description of the people’s distresses, though I have a generous soul, sensible of wrongs and swelling for redress. But what can I do? I see their situation, know their danger, and participate their sufferings, without having it in my power to give them farther relief, than uncertain promises. In short I see inevitable destruction, in so clear a light, that unless vigorous measures are taken by the assembly, and speedy assistance sent from below, the poor inhabitants that are now in forts must unavoidably fall, while the remainder are flying before a barbarous foe. In fine the melancholy situation of the people,—the little prospect of assistance,—the gross and scandalous abuse cast upon the officers in general,—which is reflecting on me in particular for suffering misconduct of such extraordinary kinds,—and the distant prospect, if any, of gaining honor or reputation in the service, cause me to lament the hour, that gave me a commission, and would induce me, at any other time than this of imminent danger, to resign without one hesitating moment, a command from which I never expect to reap either honor or benefit; but on the contrary have an almost absolute certainty of incurring displeasure below, while the murder of helpless families may be laid to my ac-

count here ! The supplicating tears of the women, the moving petitions of the men melt me into such deadly sorrow, that I solemnly declare, if I know my own mind, I could offer myself a willing sacrifice to the butchering enemy, provided that would contribute to the people's ease " !

And here I close the detail. You behold in this one extract your Washington, complete, mature, ready for the salvation of his country. The occasion, that calls him out may come soon or it may come late, or it may come both soon and late ;—when ever it comes, he is ready for the work. A misguided ministry may accelerate or measures of conciliation retard the struggle ; but its hero is prepared. His bow of might is strung and his quiver hangs from his shoulders, stored with three-bolted thunders. The summons to the mighty conflict may come the next year,—the next day ; it will find the rose of youth on his cheek, but it will find him wise, cautious, prudent, and grave : it may come after the lapse of time, and find his noble countenance marked with the lines of manhood, but it will find him alert, vigorous, unexhausted. It may reach him the next day on the frontiers in arms for the protection of the settlement ; it may reach him at the meridian of life, in the retirement of Mount Vernon ; it may reach him as he draws near to the grave ; but it will never take him by surprise. It may summon him to the first Congress at Philadelphia ; it will find him brief of speech, in matter weighty, / pertinent, and full, in resolution firm as the perpetual hills, in personal influence absolute. It may call him to the command

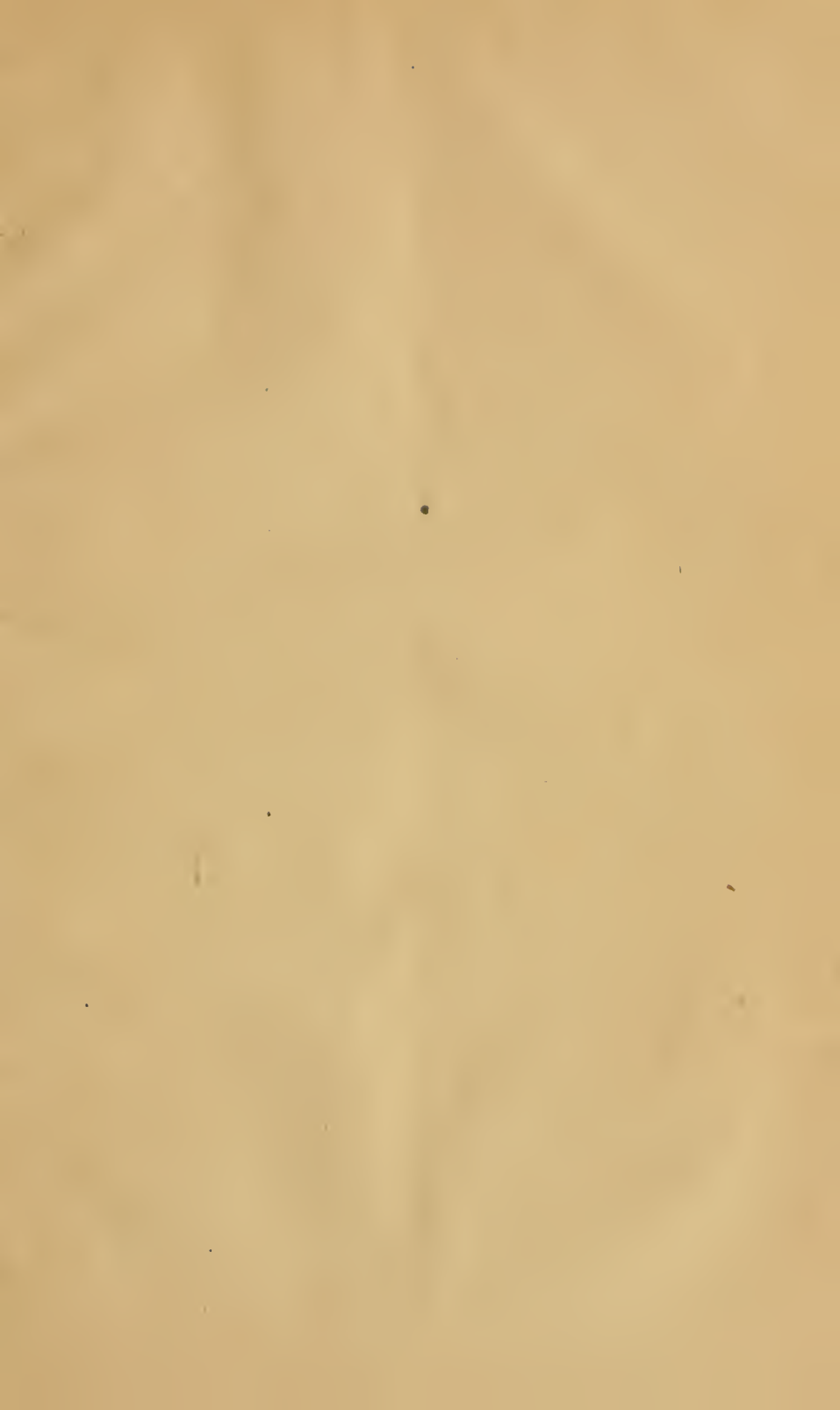
of armies ; the generous rashness of youth alone will be chastened by the responsibility of his great trust, but in all else he shall exhibit unchanged that serene and godlike courage, with which he rode unharmed through the iron sleet of Braddock's field. It may call him to take part in the convention, assembled to give a constitution to the rescued and distracted country. The soldier has disappeared, the statesman, the patriot is at the post of duty ; he sits down in the humblest seat of the civilian, till in the assembly of all that is wisest in the land, he by one accord is felt the presiding mind. It will call him to the highest trust of the new formed government ; he will conciliate the affections of the country in the dubious trial of the constitution ; and he will organize, administer, and lay down the arduous duties of a chief magistracy unparalled in its character, without even the suspicion of swerving in a single instance from the path of rectitude. Lastly the voice of a beloved country may call him for a third time, on the verge of three score years and ten, to the field. The often sacrificed desire for repose,—the number and variety of services already performed ;—his declining years might seem to exempt him, but he will obey the sacred call of his country in his age, as he obeyed it in his youth. He gave to his fellow citizens the morning, he will give them the evening of his existence ;—he will exhaust the last hour of his being, and breathe his dying breath, in the service of his country.

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